

Internet vs. Purchased Research Databases

Use this information to illustrate the benefits of the library's resources versus the "wild Web."

Internet	Subscription Research Databases
Best use	
General. Quick and easy for small tasks. Broad sweep of all information openly available online.	Designed to help pinpoint information quickly. Information chosen by librarians for relevance to organization.
Quality, type, and relevance of information	
Search results are websites, ranked by relevancy determined by computer programs. Unreliable for getting to deep archives, peer-reviewed or refereed content. Links to information can be outdated and/or taken from sources unknown or open to question. Note: Same uncertainty holds true for Wikipedia-style encyclopedias; user-supplied content can be poorly sourced.	Search results are research solutions, ranked in order of relevance by professional researchers and subject experts. Accurate. Reviewed and updated regularly. Designed by librarians and end users through advisory boards, interviews, and focused research. Access to full-text articles provided by linking technologies, no matter where the original information resides. Reflects partnership with thousands of publishers to ensure copyrighted newspaper, magazine, and journal content is included in search results. Databases are more than raw data: also include maps, graphics, video, and audio clips.
Organization, searching	
Vast information pool of everything openly available on the Internet. May not search information stored in databases. Provides keyword searching. May not have subject categories.	High-value "microcosm" of the best and most relevant information available on a specific topic. Natural language searching improves relevancy of results and maximizes research effort. Search by keyword, combination of keyword and subject, by date for most recent, relevant results.
Research aids	
Not much support.	High-quality finding aids. Structure and guided searches build research skills. Features support the research process (email capability, marking articles, "My Research" summaries, citation models, etc.).
Paid placements and ads	
Ads and links are sought for profit and can distract users from research tasks.	None. The focus is work.
Bottom line	
Inconsistent—can be good for answering quick questions, but for serious research, time can be wasted viewing irrelevant websites or judging incomplete, false, or misleading information. If used for research, back up with at least two other non-Web sources.	Consistent—reliable, high-quality, relevant content. Because content is focused, users spend less time trying to find information and more time on critical projects.